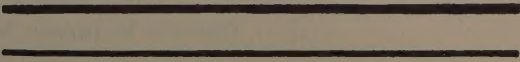
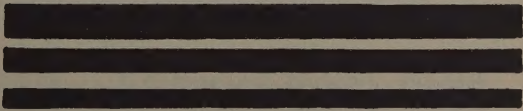


CHALLENGE

A LITERARY
QUARTERLY



MARCIA PRENDERGAST
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MARIAN MINUS
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Tramp Love

PAUL TREMAINE

I rode the street car to the end of the line. The line ended just a little way inside the city limits the north side of Columbus. Then I walked a hundred yards or so and sat down on the grass underneath a tree. It was nice there out of the sun; the ground seemed so cool after hot pavements of the city. Automobiles skimmed almost silently over the highway. A freight engine moved lazily up and down bumping cars around in the yard, across the road, and down in the gully. I could see the engineer in the window mopping his face with a red bandana. The almost colorless smoke went right up straight from the hot stack; little heat waves jiggled before my eyes.

Stretching out on my stomach. I rolled a cigarette. I had turned my back on the highway and the railroad track. A golf course began here, a little way from the road. Men and women moved around in pairs all over the course. The grass was brown and dry, and dust came up in little whirls from their steps. As I watched them I envied them just a little. Their nice white clothes, their parked automobiles, their homes and dinners awaiting them. Cool drinks, cool salads.

Mothers, fathers, babies, everything that a homeless tramp often longs for, for a moment.

I rolled over on my back and gazed up at the clear, hot sky. Winged seeds drifted by up there in the air. They seemed alive as they moved. I knew they were moving swiftly, for as I looked through the leaves of the tree they passed out of sight like a flash. The air was so dead and still that not a leaf on the tree stirred. I fell to wondering about the air currents that must be moving up above where the seeds floated. I was almost asleep.

Another street car had come out and stopped with a jangling noise at the end of the line. I sat up to watch it. The conductor was already out, changing the trolley around for the return to the city, when a girl stepped down from the car carrying a small black bag. She began walking up the highway. Her hair was very blond. The sun shone from it as she turned her head once to look back at the car. She wore white slacks and seemed quite neat and trim as she tripped swiftly along the highway toward where I was sitting.

I pushed my battered old felt hat back on my head and let the

brown paper cigarette dangle unlighted from my lower lip. A car or two passed her before she neared me. I knew by the way she looked up that she was a hitch-hiker. The cars were crowded and didn't stop. When she came opposite where I sat, she looked easily at me. She hesitated only an instant, then the little black bag sailed through the air to light on the ground beside me. She took off her white knitted beret, and with it dangling in her hand, she walked through the shallow ditch toward me.

"Hello," she called out. "It looks cool in the shade there."

She came nearer, fluffing her hair with one hand. It was wispy and curly and like white gold.

I lay back on my side and one elbow and watched her as she kicked the bag over with one foot, sat down on it, kicked her slippers off, wiggled her toes and observed them seriously for a moment.

She looked at me. "Have you a cigarette?"

"I have the makin's."

She held out her hand. "Gimme, please."

I picked up the can and papers and handed them to her. She was expert. Her fingers twisted a dandy smoke as rapidly as I could. I scratched a

match on my shoe and held it out to her. When she had a light I relighted my own dead butt. She inhaled deeply and then looked around her. She observed everything all around on both sides of us in silence, smoking.

I, too, was silent; just looked at her. She was only a kid. Not more than twenty. Hardly that. Clean and neat, just like she had stepped out of a band-box, so to speak. Her slacks were ordinary white duck. They were men's slacks, worked over. Above them she wore a waist of thin, white silk. I could see the pale green lace brassiere over tiny breasts. Her throat was delicate and the skin was a little red but very smooth. No paint on her face or lips. Just a light coat of powder.

My elbow and shoulder began to ache from lying like that. I dropped down on my back and blew smoke towards the sky.

A motor or two hummed by on the road. The engine over in the yards blew a shrill blast. A bell clanged.

She began to talk. Her voice was soft. It came easily, and not too deep. She had a peculiar, almost Southern accent, or maybe more Western than Southern.

"It's nice to be sitting here in the shade. It's summer—quiet and still. No one cares about us. Automobiles go zipping past. Nothing to bother about. Noth-

ing to worry about. We can sit here as long as we like or leave when we want to. I don't have nothing to—we don't have nothing," she finished suddenly. "Do we?"

I turned my head to look at her. "No, nothing," I agreed. "We lay down when we're tired and just rest. The world is ours. Always there is someone who will give us a ride when we want to go. Some may scowl at us and shake their heads, but always there is one. Yeah, girlie, it's sure nice in the summer. Sure is."

I sat up and began to roll another cigarette.

A couple of men, hitch-hikers, came past on the road. They stopped to wave thumbs, half-heartedly, at a passing car which didn't stop. They looked at us. We looked at them. One of them eyed my tobacco greedily.

"Smoke, fellas," I called.

They scrambled through the ditch and grass and eagerly accepted my tobacco and papers. They were dirty and tired out. Long, deeply lined faces. Belts with long flapping tongues pulled tightly around thin waists. The older of the two returned my papers and tobacco with a "Thanks, buddy." His eyes lowered as if in shame. I noticed that neither man met the girl's glance.

Her face was a study of pity and sympathy. The men turned swiftly, shambled back to the road, and walked down it out of sight.

We were silent, our thoughts much alike or poles apart. The girl then took a file from her pocket and began to work on her nails. I broke twigs into tiny lengths.

"You're not like the rest of the fellows. I mean like any of the fellows I've met on the road. I mean—I mean—oh, you're different," she finished lamely. Her hand waved uncertainly in a circle. She studied my face, my clothes, my eyes.

"Have you been out a long time, then," I asked.

Her blue eyes dimmed and again she bent to her manicuring. "Three years. I've been going from place to place three years."

She stopped her manicuring and stretched out beside me on the grass. She nibbled a grass stem as she told me her story.

She was from Nebraska. Her parents were farmers and very poor. That is, there was a big family and they didn't have much money. She had finished high school and gone to the city. No work. She hated to return home and be a burden to them, so she left first one city and then another. Sometimes she worked,

sometimes she just traveled, hitch-hiking on the highways. She had been in every state, and done all sorts of work, waitress, child's nurse, and everything else. She wanted to work, liked to work, but there were so many girls looking for jobs, and so many reasons for jobs suddenly ending. Most times the reasons were men.

And the men who picked her up on highways. Sure, she had to be nice to them. She had to pay for many a ride. Not with money, but in the only way a poor girl could pay. Especially a nice-looking young girl. She was not bitter about it. It was the only practical way. She had tried to be clean, had tried to find work first, and at first it had seemed tough to find that all the men were alike in one respect. But she held no ill feeling toward the majority of them. It was that or starve or walk. Some of them had been kind, had given her money. She never asked for it. She went to hotels with them or stayed in the car with them. Sometimes they had been rough truck drivers. They had big, roomy bunks in those freight trucks. At first it was pretty hard to take, but one learns it doesn't matter. A bath in the morning, and one forgets the bad taste.

She picked up the tobacco and

built another smoke. I lighted it for her. After the first puff she talked again.

"But one thing I refuse to do, and that is work at waiting table or something, and then sleep with the boss to hold the job. I'm willing to do one or the other to get by, but both! Nu-heugh, not this little gal! That's why I'm here today. I've been waiting on table here in Columbus, getting five dollars a week, paying two for a room and three to spend. Not much, but it was enough. The boss has been trying to make me ever since I've been here, three weeks now. Last night he told me plain. I'd either come to his room or get out. I got out. He's the kind of man I hate. The others? Well, I'm just fair game for them."

Her voice went dreamy. "I just keep going and going. Doing the best I can, keeping as close to ways I was taught as I can, and still exist. Lots of soap and water and clean clothes, hoping and dreamin' that a day will come when I can get a break, a good guy, a fairy prince." She broke off, "Oh hell! I'm crazy, I guess."

I lay with my chin on my hands, gazing out across the golf course. In my heart I pitied her, liked her spirit, admired her. She was a square little thing—frank and practical as hell. I had met many girls on the road,

but none like her. She had a brain to think with. She lived as best she could.

"Tell me," she questioned, "Why are you so different from the others I've met?"

"I don't know," I answered, "unless it's because I've always been a tramp. Always. I don't care about anything. I'm pretty much like you, I guess, mentally speaking. Of course, I'm a man; that's our only difference. Do you understand?"

"I think I do," she answered. "I see it now. We're alike. I should have known that without asking. But tell me, isn't there anything you long for? Something you're really crazy to have?"

I thought for awhile. "No. There's nothing. And most of the things I do get or have, I care nothing about."

She turned on her side and studied me again. "How about girls? Don't you ever crave that kind of companionship? Most men do."

"There are times when I think about them. There've been times when the idea seemed rather nice, but to really care or crave or long for them or for one, I don't think I ever did."

"She put a hand on my arm. "If I stayed here with you all night, I mean. Would it make

you happy? Would you like to have me?"

I jerked my head to look into her frank eyes. She was just being kind, wanting to share what she had of happiness with one she thought in need of it.

"I would be happy while you were here," I answered softly, "but tomorrow after you had gone, I would be more unhappy than ever."

She nodded slowly, slapping me once or twice lightly on the back. "Fella," she said, "if things were different I reckon I could learn to love you like I dream of loving someone. You're the kind. But we haven't anything. We don't want anything except security or nothing. Do we?"

I shook my head.

She got to her feet saying, "I better be going. I want to get to another town tonight."

I got up, too, and stretched and sat down again. She combed her hair down smooth and picked up her bag to go. Then she set it down again and reached inside her white blouse. Her brassiere had a pocket in it. She brought out a few folded bills.

"You got any money?" she asked. "I know a guy can't raise money on the road so easy as a girl."

"You're a good little egg, girlie," I replied. "Sure I've got dough. I was in a crap game last

night." I showed her a roll of bills.

She tucked hers back into the little pocket and picked up the bag again. She stood looking at me almost tenderly.

"Well, if you ever see me again, sing out, won't you?"

I nodded. She turned and walked out to the road.

A car came. A seaman. I knew from his appearance, for one learns on the road. One glance and a driver is labeled.

He slowed and stopped. She put her bag in the back and got in front beside him. He looked down at her, smiling, then shift-

ed gears. The car started. She turned and looked back. She didn't wave.

I smoked for hours, then I dropped off to sleep. When I awoke it was dark. The skies were clouded. A stiff breeze had come up. Off toward the south a rain storm was blowing up. A train was just whistling out of the yards. I had time to make it, and started to walk over to the yards. A few drops of rain spattered on my hat. I ran then, and just swung up into a car as the skies exploded with tons of water. The whistle sounded eerie and weak as it came drifting back along the train.

—:o:—

New England Color Scheme

OWEN DODSON

I am an alien in this winter place:
 Give me my Summers where the heart may grow
 Instead of frosty Elm hair stiff as lace;
 Instead of being blighted let me go
 Where all things fruitful have their inch of soil
 To prosper in. Darkly I lie where pale
 Now the shadows stand; darkly I toil
 And toiling comprehend that I must fail
 As long as I of darkness seek the creed
 Of daylight and begin
 To curse the Jungle pattern of my seed.
 I know that I shall never fully win
 My Summers back until my heart has lost
 The memory of the whiteness in this frost.

Present Trends of Negro Literature

MARIAN MINUS

The ideal and ultimate goal of literature is the achievement of the universality of appeal, and the immortalization of character and social situation. Students and readers who have an appreciation for literature agree that it is this universal nature of some written works which has caused them to be new with each century and generation. Recently Gertrude Stein wrote that there is too little content in the label of universality. To avoid the pitfall of apparently using the same tag, Miss Stein has made articulate a distinction between the human mind and human nature. In this dichotomy, her emphasis is upon the transience of the things which the mind perceives, and the lasting way in which human nature knows a truth. To this she attributes the millennial existence of "great literature," the analysis of which is that it is the concern of human-kind with itself which is the determining factor. What Miss Stein fails to make clear is that neither the human mind nor human nature can exist fully developed in the social sense without the other. It is the fusion of these two things, the fact that one is the function of the other, from which

the factors contributing to universality are born.

No literature can approach greatness if it is not the integrated reflection of the heritage from which it springs. Feeling for this heritage as the source of characters which are brought into being can not come if there is no freedom to claim it as belonging wholly and equally to every one who draws from it. This is true, be the characters sons and daughters of the soil, hamlet or city street. And, indeed, if they transcend the cosmic entirely. The Negro writer has the right and must claim the heritage which has been many times denied him in a land where he has been an eccentric alien. In doing so, he may at first lean toward the creation of what may seem puppet-figures inasmuch as they remain symbols and do not have the vitality of distinct characters. In these cases the situation is paramount. This need not be unhealthy and does not become alarming unless there is no promise of progression beyond this point. Otherwise, it is a period of adolescence during which the new literature is passing to an adulthood in which there will be embodied figures

who will first be fellow-men and then the objects who reflect the social scene in terms of its operation upon them and their reaction to these forces.

True as it is that we cannot divorce ourselves as members of a smaller group from the general stream of American life and influences, we must develop ourselves in the expression of the many-sidedness of the racial idiom. The provinces of folk prose and poetry, dialectical refinements, and phases of Negro ideology as it has been colored by centuries of oppression are still to be exhausted. The "great Negro novel" has not been written because these fields have been too meagerly explored. Arna Bontemps' **Black Thunder** approaches the incorporation of these elements more completely than any other novel in addition to his great feeling for and his knowledge of the characters who people his book. Not only that, but he has gone along the road which grew from the smaller paths of the things which the mind saw singly and microscopically during the minutes of those days of which he wrote, and which were telescoped in terms of human nature which was the intimate outgrowth of the mores of the period.

The time is past when the patterns of veneer of a class which

is foreign to the great bulk of Negro life shall guide creative work. The return to the earthy, burning, vital forces which typify the greater proportion of Negro existence is the hope and source of work in the immediate future. These are the things that are dynamic, but their recognition as such is no plea for a nationalist literature which will be the end of literary attainment for the Negro. It is, on the contrary, an exhortation that this be a phase recognized as necessary and therefore well examined, but that it will not fall into the error of consistent creation of poetry and prose out of prejudice. Such a result would be an in-turning bitterness which would make void the very things which cause a character to live long after the pages of his exposition are yellowed. That which is beautiful, significant, living, and peculiar to the smaller group would become colorless mediums through which shibboleths, detached clichés, and a routine of stereotyped expressions would be uttered.

The Negro writer must use the factors of his background which he knows and feels as part of him. The tendency toward the continued creation of symbols must not become solidified to the exclusion and at the expense of greater creative possibilities.

Folk literature for many writers has been the revelatory and pregnant source out of which the probabilities of character realization have been best studied. The Negro writer must look carefully to the legends, myths and ballads of former years in which Negroes have immortalized their culture heroes for those elements of universality. Some of those figures will last for ages, not because they are black and beloved of a black people, but because they are people, sometimes touched with the super-human, who reflect the aspirations and failures of all humanity. These monuments, once human, must call to the mind the lesson of synthesis of symbol and individual character.

The present Negro writer is facing the flood of two tides: The thought of the social realists which touches him as a creative person, and the attempt at the collection of the scattered remnants of what he can hold close to him as his exclusive cultural heritage as a member of a minority group. Afraid of his racial themes may already be considered blunt and perhaps sordid, he has, in many instances, turned away in self defense from realism. He has discarded sentimentality preparatory to becoming a realist but has read his finished manuscript feeling that he has suggested depths best

left unplumbed. Thus he often returns to apologies, writing about things and people who have no meaning and whom the world will never care about because they do not matter, encased either in white or black skin. This is an extreme which must be as assiduously avoided as that inherent in the incipient nationalism of some of the younger writers.

The fusion of the forces from within primary and secondary groups must be achieved. The creative Negro must remember that he is a creator of scene and character. His only identification with any group or school must be in terms of the fact that he is a member of a world-society. It is not an easy task in this time when allegiances are made and broken with increasing rapidity. As a writer and as a Negro, he must know the things of the mind of his character, and he must know the social implications which have made the expression of the human nature of this same character distinct and worthy of depiction. At the same time, he must not fail to remember that human nature is not the accessory of any one racial group but is an attribute of all mankind. His task, therefore, is the reflection of these things against the background of the total configuration of world-wide human emotions, ideals and struggles.

Ann Wittke

HENRI WEIGEL

She walked around the streets wearing a long, gray cape of rough cloth. Her green hat sat tipsily on her head, mocking the dignity of her gray hair. Enclosed in the privacy of her cloak, she carried a bag of rice.

The streets were dirty with the snow that had fallen a few days ago, and occasional sparrows, seeking food, perched for a moment on the icy pavements.

Ann Wittke, her nervous blue eyes continuously darting about, ignored the people, the trucks, and the tall buildings. As if her vision had a special lens that could block out everything but sparrows and cats, she rushed to the spot where the birds had rested, and scattered the rice lavishly. Sometimes, in a package, she carried a bit of meat with which she would tempt a skulking cat, whose whiskers would twitch at so generous a feast.

This was her daily activity. She lived in the basement of a grimy old building, in a small, dark room. Lace doilies, long grown brown with dust, primly sat on the backs of two huge stuffed chairs, whose springs were broken.

No one knew where or how

Ann Wittke got money. She paid rent of three dollars a week, and cooked her meals on a two-burner gas stove. She kept the room spotlessly clean, and varied her walks with endless sweeping. With vigorous gestures, she would swing the broom back and forth on the floor, faded from too much brushing. There was an intensity in her sweeping, and her thick-set body and gray hair flying would seem like an old figure spinning in a mad dance that had no power to stop.

Old Mrs. Jenks, the landlady, would push the door open. In a breathless, shrill voice she would ask: "What's wrong? You must be rich to wear out so many brooms." Ann Wittke would laugh, her laughter like a cracked bell. She would hold up the broom, waving its dilapidated bristles into the face of the landlady, who would hurriedly slam the door and depart, her loose slippers clattering down the hall.

Mrs. Jenks would occasionally vary her daily comments about the broom with the query, "Why don't you get a cat to keep you company?"

Ann Wittke would look at her, her blue eyes suddenly

bright and piercing, her inevitable laughter startling the room. But she never brought a cat home.

One day Mrs. Jenks failed to come. The broom danced faster and faster. The one window in the room was blurred with dust. A kitten on the outer ledge clawed at the pane, and its green eyes followed the broom cautiously.

"So, Mrs. Jenks, you're coming in through the window today, are you?" Ann Wittke waved the broom, and opened the window. A timid paw daintily touched the inside ledge, and the cat entered the room. It curled up in a ball and began washing itself.

"You're much handsomer in that dress, Mrs. Jenks," said Ann Wittke, picking the kitten up in her arms.

"See who's here, grandmother!" she shouted to the largest chair.

The kitten purred.

Ann Wittke did not take her usual walk that day. All day she sat and watched the cat. When it nimbly leaped from chair to shelf, her laughter shook the room.

Sweeping became an even more intense game, with the kitten flying and leaping at the bristles as they swung over the floor. Faster and faster whirled

the broom, but the kitten moved more cautiously after unsuccessful tries to claw it.

A few days later when Mrs. Jenks came again, upon seeing the cat, she allowed her wide hips to come into the room as well as her head, which usually hung in the opening of the door like a grotesque lantern.

"Now, you've done as I told you. That's good." Her puffy face wagged. She mewed at the cat.

Ann Wittke blinked. Her eyes darted as swiftly as her broom. "A fine game you're playing. You're a twin—and I never knew it!" Her laughter made the ceiling tremble as she pointed to the kitten. "I like her better than you."

Mrs. Jenks' eyes looked as if they were about to fall out of her head. She rushed away and never again allowed all of herself to enter Ann Wittke's room. Only rarely did she permit even her head to peer in through a crack of the door.

With her walks abandoned. Ann Wittke's day was devoted to the cat. She carried on long conversations with the animal, who occasionally cocked its head to one side and mewed.

The juicy pieces of meat, that in the past had fed many cats, now became the sole property of the kitten. It grew fat and

lazy, and soon refused to join in the game of the broom.

Ann Wittke would coax and beg: "Mrs. Jenks, what's got into you these days?"

No longer did the broom feverishly dance. Ann Wittke would sit in a chair and watch the cat as it sprawled on the floor. For hours the woman and cat would face each other, and sometimes the woman's eyes became fierce with waiting. No longer did her laughter strike the room now choked with silence.

The cat grew fat. It paid scarcely any attention to the old woman, and casually accepted the meat and caresses. Ann Wittke would dangle a string before its eyes, trying to rouse it to playfulness. With a lazy paw, the cat would slap the string. Happy at even its slightest response, Ann Wittke would slobber endearments to it. At night it crept into bed beside her, emitting soft whirring sounds, like a well-oiled motor.

The cat grew heavier and resented its contentment being interrupted. When the old woman would lift the broom high and playfully shake it, the cat would stretch, and move to another corner of the room.

"You feed it too well," the landlady advised. "Starve her a bit, and she'll be better off."

The next day Ann Wittke did

not feed the cat. Provokingly, she dangled a piece of meat before it. With swift leaps the cat tried to catch the meat. Ann Wittke fastened the meat in the straws of the broom. "Now you'll play."

Joyously she began to sweep, and the wheels in her head began to turn. Wilder and wilder became her movements. Her hips swayed, her gray hair loosened and hung about her face. The cat, no longer indifferent, arched its back and fought the broom, its angry claws vigorously attacking the bristles.

"Play, play!" Ann Wittke screamed. "I believe you're angry, Mrs. Jenks. Play, and I'll feed you well tonight."

The cat hissed and spat at her.

"Well, if you want to fight, I'll fight you," said Ann Wittke, and lunged at the cat with the broadside of the broom.

The animal tried to hide under the bed. It bobbed up and down frantically. The impact of the broom against its soft body was a new sensation to Ann Wittke: it was satisfying. Her lips twitched lasciviously. She cornered the cat and beat it again and again.

Suddenly the door pushed open. Mrs. Jenks' face peered in. "What's up?" Her voice jumped with terror. "Look at your cat!"

Ann Wittke's broom moved

slower and slower, and stopped. "I beat you, Mrs. Jenks," she said. "You were a wicked girl."

The landlady slammed the door and fled down the hall.

Ann Wittke dropped the broom. Her arms now hung limply at her sides. She sank to the floor, and stared at the dead cat. With tired fingers she stroked it. When she withdrew

her hands, they were covered with blood.

Suddenly big tears rolled down Ann Wittke's cheeks. Her face was like a collapsed balloon. The ecstasy was gone. Her eyes darted to all the corners of the room.

"Mrs. Jenks, do you hear me? Mrs. Jenks, I'm sorry. I only wanted you to play with me."

Pope Pius the Only

BRUCE NUGENT

It was decidedly uncomfortable. But then Rome had burned so who was he? Algy sniffed his smoke and burned. The fire around his feet was beginning. Slowly and hotly they burned and then—poof—the acrid trail singed clean his legs, and—poof—his crotch—poof-poof his eyebrows. So Algy just stood and burned and the heat on his feet was so great as to seem cold and he remembered how hot a tub of water could be before adequate testing. Like ice and dry ice burns. He had seen it smoke under water once. Algy floated along and turned over on his back, his little gills fanning. And knew he was no longer a cinder with black face and hands because the noise of the waters

had washed him clean, washed in the blood of the lamb. So he'd have lamb with mint sauce for the asking. As long as he lived and burned like hell. Algy turned over and swam with pallid stroke for his gills were very, very weary.

It was then that he met the merman, a truly remarkable creature with his legs each going off into a tail. And Algy remembered mermaids and thought, "how comfortable, how cozy" and burrowed deep into the bowels of the earth. He had been smoking "reefers"—better known in better circles as marijuana. In yet other and different circles as weed, as griefier. But Algy had been smoking "reefers"—and he let his head

drop forward where it hung heavy and pleasant on his chest while he thought for hours about tossing it back to wobble pleasantly uncertain atop his spine. For hours he thought, forcing his will to lift his head from his chest and juggle it precariously above his shoulders. And it was a full minute before he did. He knew that it was only a minute, that the hours of time had somehow been cramped into that one minute, only he knew that it was hours too. Time was very unimportant or maybe he meant elastic. But it had been of greatest importance that he drop his head first forward then back, and let it loll. The simple combined movement would "set his gauge." Then space would converge, and thoughts and time, dimensions become distorted and correct, he would become aware and super aware and aware of awareness and on and on and a chain of dove tailings and separate importances. Everything would have its correct perspectives. Time, thought, deed and the physical surrounding him and surrounding that and—first first dimension, second dimension, third, fourth and fifth dimension—no need to stop there—the incredible dimension of the pin point, the worm, the man—at one and the same time blending yet separate. Not only did

he have to imagine the fourth side of things now. He could see it. See all sides—top, bottom, four sides, outside *and* inside.

And when he arose his slow maneuverings would be swift as an arrow while all the while they would be as slow as death and normal. Above all, normal, despite conflicting sensations which did not conflict. So he swiftly at snail-like pace rose from his seat. And his eyes dilated contractedly and his vision was photographic, stereoscopical and omnipotent.

So he went on down Seventh Avenue nineteen thirty five summer and fall E.R.A., N.R.A. P.W.A., W.P.A. Almost like Russia for initials. Huey P. Long and General Hugh Johnson only Long was dead and so was Pushkin. Long live Pushkin.

Algy stepped thru an idea and the glamour of a Russian court warmed him after the icy blasts outside. On all sides of him, and inside too the white faces surrounding him were red or pink or other than white. They were the white man. White Russia, coursing about him and thru him. His insides must be quite white by now because he was Pushkin, and somehow, somewhere there was a blinding which made his yellow skin black. White Russia with red faces, or at least so he felt as he

reached for a sable with which to soothe his hurt and was prophetic. Hannibal had crossed the Alps with Elephants, so Pushkin smiled a grin across Mongolia and thought of Catherine the Great as an army whispered by. And he withdrew into his red boots lined with black and white and wrote a poem.

His elephant slipped and an avalanche cascaded down the Roman side. He only smiled and wept when his army thought "Hannibal be careful." Formerly he thought Roman warmth but that was from the sea and it is cold on the heights. Oh he was great with future but he thought "Oh, Hannibal, I weep for an olive" and sighed as he bit into a Turkish delight. Alexander the beautiful, the youthful soldier with Greek behaviour.

And the taste of Turkish delight was strange to Crispus Attucks. It filled his mouth with strangeness. Boston was a wheel within a wheel high up in the middle of the air. He bowed pleasantly to Phyllis Wheatley as he passed, for she had passed on, and thought "what a thing indeed is Sunday-school, springing as it did with biblical flourish thru Africa." And his black hands did not tremble as he laughed to see the dish run away with the spoon. But he stumbled and fell, his head was so high,

his palms so pink. And as his blood foamed on his lips he only wished he was in other circles, breathing in to dry his throat, "reefers." He most decidedly wanted to be in the vernacular.

But he lit instead a star. There was a rite connected with this. He loosened first the end of Capricorn with his thumb and forefinger, caressing it gently into useful shape, then, stars converging, stars diminishing he struck a match to his reefer. So he strolled on down Seventh Avenue, "trucked on down the midway" alive and atingle the whole dead length of him, aware and dreaming from his "stomps" to his "conk," and thought I could have meant "kicks" or even feet—and skull or even head but only in circles where words were English instead of "jive"—stomps—feet sky-piece—hat skull—head—

atingle and dead from toe to head. He must not make a poem on Seventh Avenue. Or be Ira Aldridge or Dumas pere. Instead—instead—from toe to head—glide—slide—ride the crest—breast—best of Seventh Avenue. So he walked on down Seventh Avenue and then crossed one hundred and twenty-fifth street. And he stood in the crowd and was Georgia and Mississippi, a sort of walking

delegate, and when they hanged John Brown he was a shadow, the sun full upon him. He sorrowed as he laughed and took off his head with a courtly bow and said "Good evening white folks." Then he ran like hell. He had forgotten to say Mister White Folks. He giggled. It sounded so funny. "Mr. White Folks. Mr. White—Monsieur Blanc." He tittered as he ran and led an army to revolt in French. It was fine. A fine language being Toussaint or Christophe or Dessalines. It was too fine with scarlet breeches, and mulatto bitches, and high black places for whites to stumble from. And the fires of the burning sugar fields made a nice light to see him by and a pungent acrid caramel smell to carve words in the dark of a French dungeon. But they cut him to pieces and that was confusing—cut him into one Herndon and nine Scottsboro pieces of eight. So he walked in glory and was Emperor Jones and sang whenever he was hailed the title the people called him.

Shim-sham-shimmy and charleston. He danced the gri-gri down Seventh Avenue and stopped for another gri-gri-griever. Algy drew deep on the "reefer" and knew how good it was that he did not think. That no thought of Haile Selassie frowned on

him. He couldn't think and that was well for who wants time and space and physical fact—deed and thought contort distraught. Viva la Mussolini and cock-a-doodle-do—until time to sleep.

But then water babies see many things Algy knew, for as he swam beneath the carcass of a sea anemone he thought "how like Verlaine. How Gauguin the antennae." Mouchoir was the word, the strangely succinct word with which to wipe clean his muddled mood. So Algy blew his nose and slightly swam down the Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Nile, the white Nile and joined the Italian army. But only to work black magic, for his conjured—

"Abrac-Adowa" and lo it fell, crashing mightily from 1896 and Algy entered Addis Ababa with forty thieves. They were looking for peace—pieces of eight—which were Africa and others thru Africa. So Algy thought "how simple" and Adigrat fell regained.

And it burned—the chains at his wrist were white hot now and Algy thought "how needlessly painful, how annoying" and turned over to sleep thru the lynching. But his lips were parched. Not that he liked it but there he was—he'd no idea that being the fly in the ointment could be so sticky.

Proof

BESSIE CALHOUN BIRD

Other loves I have known.
One there was which struck suddenly,
Like a great stone
Plunging the waters of a quiet pool
It troubled my being with violent ecstasy. . . .
Then easing gradually
It eddied away . . . was gone,
Lost in ever-widening ripples
Of calm, cool
Apathy.

Another came almost imperceptibly,
Like the subtle fragrance of a flower
Wind-scattered in Spring
It claimed my senses delicately;
Suffused me with yearning tenderness
For one enraptured hour. . . .
Then being a thing
Infinitely too fragile to last,
At the very dawn of its budding
It passed.

I am glad, Dear One, that I have known
So much of vagrant love;
Each ephemeral travesty
Has but served to prove
That this which has grown
Oakwise with time,
Storm tested by you and me
Is, and ever shall be
The gift sublime,
The intramutable verity.

The Spider in Jamaica Folklore

LOUIS G. SUTHERLAND

The precious remnants of African inheritance and tradition that continue to survive in the West Indies today are securely enthroned in the Negroes' impregnable faith in a living world of spirits and of obeah; a scattered score of African words; lingering traces of African folk-music, folk-rhymes and proverbs; and an abundantly rich, but as yet only sparsely harvested field, of Negro folk-tales.

With their transplantation into the unfriendly world of the white man the Negroes imported with them their spiritual and intellectual African heritage—their mores and their folk-ways. Coming into a strange, bewildering world, in which their bodies suffered for the white man's avarice, and their souls paid for his ignominy, the slaves' burdens seemed more endurable and their tasks more complacently borne when they found it possible to make use of those portions of their African heritage—their songs, their stories and their proverbs—that were commensurate with the conditions under which they labored on the sugar-cane plantations.

That was fundamentally true, however, only with respect to

those African natives who were capable of comprehending and interpreting the deeper meaning of such stories, songs and proverbs. There was in the meantime a rising generation of Creoles who were unacquainted with the African background of their fathers, and for whom a substitution of the things of Africa for those which were known to them in their West Indian homeland became obviously necessary.

This was most true with respect to the African folk tales. While they were being unknowingly recast by the slaves to tally with familiar surroundings, those African characters unknown to them were gradually eliminated or substituted for domestic ones common to their immediate West Indian environment. Apart from such changes however, the original stories continued to retain their basic elements, many of which are still in evidence four centuries after the introduction of slavery into the islands.

The stories prevalent in Jamaica fall roughly into three categories: Those of direct African origin with modifications to fit in with conditions of environ-

ment; those that are outright European both in characters and in contents, examples of which are found in *Man Crow*, *The Three Pigs*, and *Open Sesame*, etc.; and those originally European but now become strangely interwoven with predominant strands of European influence.

In this last group, English and Irish influences are at once strongly in evidence. The early contact between Englishmen and African slaves extends back to an early period of the island's history when the Spaniards capitulated to the English, and a lively slave traffic was inaugurated. Thereafter, large numbers of British ships began visiting various seaports on the mainland, where their sailors related stories at different times in exchange for Negro folk-tales, rhymes and dances. From these subtle beginnings the European stories gradually spread throughout the island, but in greatly modified forms, following the attempt of each Negro story-teller to make his addition or to give his own interpretation of the version, until eventually only a semblance of the original remained. English stories that have retained their original characters and their setting were undoubtedly related at a much later period, when the Negroes had already adopted consider-

able of the white man's ways and were rapidly imitating him in speech and in culture.

Too, many European tales found their way amongst the Negroes through British recalcitrants who were bootlegged by the boatload into virtual slavery on the island, following repressive measures instituted against Scotch and Irish rebels and English indentures; and by the more fortunate of the citizenry who through their loyalty to the Commonwealth attained the distinction of gentry and received large grants of tracts of land from the agents of Cromwell.

* * * *

In all Negro folk-tales the universally favorite heroes are *Bre'r Anansi* (Spider) and *Bre'r Rabbit*. Both are unrivaled intelligentsia who dominate and overshadow the animal world with their brilliance and tricks—in Africa, in Mexico, in South America, in certain parts of Asia, and in the West Indies. In Southern United States Negro folk-lore, Rabbit is hero potentate. His popularity is scarcely less in evidence in Mexican folk-lore, among the scattered Indian tribes of the Amazon region, and around Lake Titicaca, and in the Andes mountains. Anansi is, on the Gold Coast and in the West Indies, what Rabbit is in the Americas.

The Rabbit of Indian and Negro folklore is immediately the common hare, the intellectual whose wisdom is seldom in keeping with his reputation. An adventurer he is, no doubt, but one whose adventures constantly lead him into trouble and frequently make him the butt of some clever fellow's wiles. Yet, his embarrassment notwithstanding, he manages to emerge, always a more popular hero, if never a luckier Rabbit.

The mantled hero of the Jamaican folk-stories is peculiarly different, both in physical make-up and in characteristic traits, from his famous contemporary Mr. Rabbit. Anansi is, first of all, not an animal that can be easily visualized, such as Rabbit, Fox or Tiger, but a nondescript composite of various characters, a composite which is challenging as well as provocative to the imagination; and secondly, his tactics, though ostentatiously done, prove not only inconvenient and uncomfortable to his associates, but are always disastrous to them. Hence they are forced to regard him with the gravest misgivings, and constantly strive to evade his company.

The word "Anansi", like several other words in common usage in the West Indies, comes from Africa. The Ashantees of the Gold Coast have an ANAN-

SI KOKRIKO or The Great Spider, still used by them as a sobriquet for the Supreme Being, which Rattary Sutherland suggests to be of religious or totemic origin. The spider always has been regarded by the Ashantees as the very embodiment of all wisdom; a belief which doubtless explains why they chose to cloak him in the mantle of their folk hero.

That was all very well for the Negroes of Africa and for the slaves coming into the New World; but to the younger generation of Creoles in the West Indies, a weak, insignificant and cowardly spider did not seem to have the essential characteristics of a hero. It was too small, too shy and vacillating; it lacked suitable personality to lend realism to the intriguing roles assigned to it in folklore. So to the body of this namby-pamby spider were attached certain parts of the human anatomy, thereby converting it into an illusionary spider-man, something that, while retaining the dominant characteristic traits of the spider—elusiveness and cunning—would at the same time possess a suitable and essential physical appearance in order to supply the necessary touch of realism to its reputation. This creation, while apparently bridging the gulf between the mythical

and the real, unfortunately has the disadvantage of making Anansi a vague, shadowy and mysterious personage, bearing some resemblance to the familiar Scandinavian Scroll, Scrattel, or the legendary and elusive Soko of African tradition.

* * * *

By the peasants Anansi is believed to be a creature whose lower and middle portions are like those of a spider's. Two of his feet are enlarged into walking legs supporting his body; two more serve as hands; the others remain undeveloped. And to this do it spider body are attached the upper extremities of a wizardy old man; a human head with long protruding nose, cone-shaped chin, a ridiculous looking face covered with folds of wrinkles, all bearing unmistakable suggestions of the depths of his thoughts and the seriousness of his meditation. Apart from the bewitching, puerile grin upon his lips, this ugly, hairy little spider-man is a hideous picture. He travels about bending over a walking stick, with a gunny sack suspended from his shoulders, which he never hesitates to fill by the most loathsome means.

He is capable of working, but he disdains labor unless it promises exorbitant rewards, which he tries to collect before the work

has begun. His voice, too, is unpleasantly screechy and shrill. Most of the time his speech is unintelligible because of his habitual use of expressions, such as: "No me so me no yearry" (I do not wish to hear more.) But this is partial result of his association with the animals. In attempting to imitate their speech he develops a cleft place, resulting in wretched pronunciation and articulation of his words and sentences. Moreover, in spite of all his wisdom and sagacity his moral character remains fundamentally bad. He is a traitor, a notorious thief and a liar. He is brimful of the jinx, and even association with him brings bad luck.

Anansi triumphs over his contemporaries not by moral bravado nor application of physical force, but through the sheer deception and unfailing wit that once sent him into God's heaven to try his beguiling chicanery on the Almighty! Once conceiving the notion that a fellow is potentially a tempting stew, he immediately proceeds to devise the most gruesome means of affecting his death, whether it be a bosom friend or ancient foe.

Yet, notwithstanding his cleverness and sagacity, there are circumstances that constantly baffle him, and there are animals over whom he is never com-

pletely master. He is immeasurably afraid of Cow's horns and is driven repeatedly to take refuge in the banana trees from Cow's presence. He sees Mr. Cow as a sort of mysterious wise man who reveals less than he knows.

Mr. Monkey, too, although without pretense to supernatural wisdom, is more than a match for Anansi. Of Monkey's long carrotto whip, Anansi is greatly afraid; its lashing drives him into frenzy, and he is compelled to regard Mr. Monkey with respect if not with admiration. Besides, Mr. Monkey is reputed to be a magician who can, by the cutting of his cards, detect Anansi's whereabouts, and force him out of his hiding by the beating of his magic drum.

It has long been known that in substance and characters, many Jamaican stories closely parallel many related by Uncle Remus, thereby lending a lively speculative interest with respect to the source of their origin—whether they were first told in Africa, in the islands, or in the South. In others, the substance of both groups shows strong similarities, though differing in characters.

For example, the familiar tale of Uncle Remus in which Cunnie Rabbit, by feigning sick, adroitly induces Fox to be saddled and ridden to Miss Meadows' house to convince her that Fox is only

Mr. Rabbit's riding horse, is also familiar in Jamaica. There, however, it is the venerable Anansi who cunningly persuades Tiger to sally forth, with him, Anansi, perched upon his back, to the house of Miss Britannia.

In the Tar Baby stories of Uncle Remus, Bre'r Rabbit is provoked and annoyed because the Tar Baby refuses to answer or remove his hat; so Bre'r Rabbit, before assaulting him for this unforgivable impudence, makes a speech:

"I gwinter larn you howter ta'k ter 'spectable fokes if hit's de las' ack. . . . Ef you don't take off dat hat en till me houdy, I'm gwiner bus' you wide open."

In the Jamaica version the Tar Baby is a wooden stump, erected and tarred by Anansi in his field after the continuous nightly disappearance of his food supplies.

Tacoma, the guilty culprit, is about to leave the field with another bag of stolen provisions, when his eyes fall upon the stump. He walks over and unsuspectingly rests his load upon it, but to his surprise and disgust when he attempts to lift the bag to depart he discovers that it is fastened. Whereupon he proceeds to punish the stump and is himself stuck; first his hands, then his feet, and finally his belly and head. Anansi emerges from

his hiding place and sets fire to the stump.

Uncle Remus relates in "King Deer" how Rabbit, after slaughtering the King's sheep, invites Fox to appear at the King's ball and sing the refrain to Rabbit's accusations of Fox's killing the King's sheep. . . . "Some kill sheep, en some kill shote, but Bre'r Fox kill King Deer Goat."

Fox dumbly responds: "That's so, that's so, an' I am glad dat's so."

In the Jamaican equivalent of the same story which, when viewed chronologically in respect to slavery, seems the older, Anansi, is far shrewder than Rabbit. He not only inveigles Tiger to be present as his singing partner at Mr. Mighty's ball, but succeeds in getting him to appear gayly attired in a sheepskin suit, an eloquent and convincing argument in support of the charges pressed against him.

* * * *

There are innumerable myths purporting to account for Anansi's wisdom, and the curiously cultural and intellectual vagabond that he is esteemed to be. An Ashantee legend declares that in the beginning Nyankupon was chief of the gods about whom all stories were told. Spider, a jealous, conceited fellow believed himself possessed of far more wisdom than Nyanku-

pon. He approached the chief and demanded that all future stories be told about himself, and that they be called ANANSI STORIES. To which Nyankupon agreed, upon the condition that Anansi proved his claims to superior wisdom by performing certain feats. He must bring in a boa constrictor alive, and next bring in a live tiger, as well as a jar full of live bees.

Anansi was equal to all these tasks. Unlike Hercules the strong man of Greek legend who performed his labors by sheer physical prowess, Anansi used strategy. He assiduously lured the bees, the boa constrictor and the tiger to the very door of Nyankupon who, perceiving the wisdom of his rival, readily agreed that Anansi was greater, and forthwith decreed that thereafter all stories should be called ANANSI STORIES.

There is another Ashantee legend which asserts that Spider in the very beginning collected all the wisdom of the world and enclosed it in a gourd which he carried about with him, tied around his belly. However, the gourd frequently slipped and got in his way when he was climbing. Finally one day while he was attempting to adjust it, it fell and broke, knowledge scattered, and Spider himself was able to recover but a fraction of

what wisdom he formerly possessed. Until this day there is a Gold Coast tradition which affirms that the human race descended from the spider.

Whatever may be the source of Anansi's wisdom, his knowledge does not consistently shine nor is it effectual in keeping him out of trouble. He is frequently tricked by the contrivance of some jealous fellow. Mr. Candlefly delights in leading him into danger. Yet when he is confronted by such situations he shines most brilliantly. When he is on the brink of disaster and catastrophe he summons to his aid all the resourcefulness of which he is capable, often turning the tide on his conspirators.

There are instances, however, when his wisdom completely fails him, leaving him powerless. In love affairs he is most helpless and is compelled to resort secretly to the obeah man for assistance to outdo his rival, Tacoma. Bre'r Rabbit himself once consulted the conjure man for a similar reason and was informed that to "git de gal e mus git one 'gator toof an one el'phan tus'." Anansi too, received a small black bag from the obeah man which contained a mixture of salt, asafetida, and various other compounds, with instructions to sprinkle it in front of Tacoma's door, ostensibly to em-

barrass him.

One is always amazed at the peasants' admiration for Anansi, and wonders how they find it possible to harmonize their devotion to him with the grotesqueness and illusionary nature of his physical appearance and his devilish character. But these things bother the peasants not at all. Anansi's ugliness and his roguishness melt away and are forgotten under the peculiar charm of his personality and the superabundance of his knowledge. Indeed, it is for his brilliance and cleverness, and for his physical insufficiency that he is most heartily adored.

* * * *

Apart from Tiger and Monkey, most of the characters of the Anansi stories are to be found in Jamaica. Ratta (Rat), Sea Gaulin, Candlefly, Alligator, Turtle, Chicken-hawk, Rabbit, and the domestic animals—cow, goat, sheep and pig. Snakes no longer exist on the island, being long ago the victim of the vicious Indian mongoose, and but a few monkeys imported as pets, are to be seen. Tacoma is an obscure character. Although he is closely associated with Anansi, and commonly taken as his close friend, his identity remains beclouded.

Some story tellers claim that he is Anansi's son, or his brother.

However, there is no distinct trace of him in African folklore, and he seems rather an invention of the Jamaican mind. As one Negro story-teller records: "Tacoma him one spider; Anansi him one Tacoma."

The language of the stories is the familiar, daily speech of the peasant population, an English brogue woefully lacking in artistry and poetic imagination. Except for a few minor improvements which have occasionally crept in, it remains almost wholly the identical idiom in general use since the days of slavery. Its foundation goes back to the middle seventeenth century when, with the Greater Antilles abounding in prosperity, and with the addition of Jamaica to the Cromwellian string of conquests, slave labor was introduced.

Under the plantation system in vogue on the island, it was the white indentures and the recalcitrants who came into closest contact with the blacks. They supervised their tasks, gave them instructions, guarded them. It was necessary, too, to drill the slaves into understanding sufficient English to interpret the instructions of their overseers. Once they were able to grasp the significance of the English words their teaching promptly ceased, for of what use could the culti-

vation of the King's fine English be to Negro slaves on West Indian sugar-cane plantations?

So, by the time their schooling was completed, a new heterogeneous English had come into general use, an English built upon attempts of African tongues to pronounce some Anglo-Saxon words.

"Him" was used indiscriminately for feminine, masculine and neuter genders. "Dem" could mean one thing or many things. Letters such as g, s, and h were omitted altogether from word-endings. The dialect lacked even the quaintness which is commonly found in the idiom of the Southern Negro. The whole sounded like a meaningless jumble of words, and could be extremely provoking, even to the ears of an Englishman.



Vaudeville

MARCIA PRENDERCAST

The clothes on the line
Are comic, loose-jointed dancers
Who jag their legs
And fling their arms
To a senseless rhythm.
And Spring's young child,
Is forced to laugh.

Rocking Chair

ALFRED MORANG

Even above the splash of rain against the windows and the wind sighing under the eaves, Carter could hear the sound. It went on and on like an old voice complaining about the winter cold. Every day for a week he had sat there, either on the bed or in a chair beside a little table, trying to think things out, and always that sound came up through the round hole in the floor, and joined his half hopeless thoughts.

There had been two months of work on the state road fifteen miles below the village. Now that was over, had been ever since the ground became stiff with frost. Carter sighed and stretched his legs. "Well, one good thing anyway—this room only costs two dollars a week." The words died away, and the sound filled the space behind them. Carter got to his feet and walked to the window.

Maybe he would go out. No, the rain was still falling, the thick film of wet grayness dulling even trees across the road into blurred half-seen shapes. It might be the grippe, not quite over, and still hiding somewhere in his chest, that affected his mind and made the sound almost

unbearable. Carter sat down on the window sill and fixed his eyes on a distant roof that thrust itself above the dull brown-gray of leafless branches.

Of course he could not blame the old woman—no one could. That is, anyone that knew anything about the back land and how the winters were periods of utter isolation. For days at a time she rocked and kept the chair on a squeaking board. Her son said: "She likes to hear it. Old folks are like that—and if it gives her any pleasure let her do it. She ain't got much longer to live."

Carter sprang to his feet. In a sudden lull in the wind the sharp squeaking came clearer than ever. He could put something over the hole, but then the room would become too cold. The only heat in the house came from the kitchen below. He would go out and walk to the village. There was a man at the corner store that had half promised him a job. Carter put on his overcoat and opened the door of his room.

In the hallway he could not hear the squeaking, only the steady pattering of rain on the roof over his head and the sighing of the wind under the eaves.

Must be about six o'clock, he thought. I'll take it easy. No need to hurry; and besides, I feel weak. Then his mind went back over the last two weeks—how he had lain for days sick with fever. The old woman's son and his wife had been good to him, and it means a lot for people to bring hot gruel to a fellow when they have hardly enough to eat themselves.

Carter went down the stairs and into the kitchen. As he came through the doorway the squeaking slowed down and the old woman raised her eyes. They were small and bright, like black beads set deep in a wrinkled leather pillow.

"Lem—do you think it will stop raining before morning?" Carter asked.

The old woman's son looked up. Then he smiled. "No, we're in for it. A week's storm—maybe more." His hands locked over his chest. His eyes closed.

It was stifling in the kitchen. Carter knew that Lem would not move until it was time to go to bed, that his wife was already sleeping. There is little to do in the back land when the first chill storms of coming winter sweep over the land, and sleep keeps anyone more satisfied than forever looking at the dingy walls of a room.

"I'm going up to the village," Carter said.

Lem nodded slowly and did not answer. He was dozing before Carter reached the door, and all the time the old woman rocked on the squeaking board. Once the chair slipped, and she hitched it back in short jerking movements, and the sound came again, seeming more rasping than before—like a mouse that has been caught by its tail, Carter thought.

Outside, the rain was coming down in sheets, and the wind lashed bare branches together. The road was like a dirty shallow river flowing sluggishly toward a sea that it could never reach. Carter bowed his head and walked fast into the rain-blur. It was a relief to be rid of that sound; even the water trickling down his neck seemed good after the oppressive heat of the kitchen.

It was dark when Carter returned. He had seen the man and nothing had come of it. Someone in the store had said there was work on a government project in the next county, and advised Carter to go there before the rain changed into snow, as it was bound to do before morning. Carter paused just outside the door. He did not wish to leave that night. There are more pleasant things than

walking for miles along a water-filled road.

Lem stood beside the stove, his eyes fixed on the blank wall. As the draft from the doorway filled the room, the lamp flame flickered and shadows danced over bare walls. In places where plaster had fallen there were dark spots that looked like bottomless holes filled with night. Carter closed the door. Then he stood still. Something was wrong. For a moment he listened, then Lem said:

"Ma died—just fell forward while she was rocking." He paused and slowly scratched his nose and added: "But old folks won't last forever. We took her into the parlor. I'm going to the village for the undertaker. My wife is in watching the body. It's the best thing to do. Someone has got to, and the dead being none of her kin it won't affect her so much as me."

Carter stretched his hands over the stove. He did not answer. Lem seemed to take his mother's death as a matter of course. The lamp still flickered. The draft had seemed to do something to the burner. Carter watched the dancing yellow flame—like an old man with a fit of chills, he thought—chills from the back land winter.

"You better go up stairs and get some sleep," Lem said. "I'll

be starting soon. When folks die an undertaker is the kind of man to have around. They know just what to do."

The room was strangely still. Carter felt like screaming—anything—pound on the table with his fist—just make a noise to replace that thin squeaking that had come above the wind sighs and beating of the rain.

The gripe left me a little shaky," Carter said. "I guess I'll get some sleep."

He turned toward the door leading toward the stairs, but before he could reach for the knob Lem said: "I won't be back till late. If my wife wants anything she'll call you."

The darkness was thick over the bed. Against the window the rain was whispering softly. Every few minutes a gust of wind sent the drops dashing against the glass like tiny pebbles that split and fell away to the ground below.

Carter turned on one side. He must have dozed off. Anyway, he must have been dreaming. For a few seconds he tried to collect his thoughts. Then he strained his ears. Slowly the sound crept through the damp air. It rose and fell with slow regularity. Carter sat bolt upright.

"I'm still half asleep," he said aloud. His voice staggered and

died in his throat. In the kitchen the old woman was rocking. But she could not—a dead woman cannot sit in a chair. Carter jumped out of bed and put on his clothes. His teeth were chattering, and when he touched his cheek the tips of his fingers were clammy and cold.

Of course Lem's wife had become tired watching the old woman's body and had come to the kitchen. Carter tried to laugh to himself. What a fool he had been not to think of that before. But anyway, he was going away. He could tell by the wind, now sharper and more chill sounding, that it would snow before morning, and once the roads were filled it would be hard to walk over into the next county.

At the kitchen door Carter paused and gripped the knob. Through the panels he could hear the chair moving over the squeaking board. "I might as well get it over with!" he said. The words gave Carter courage. There could be no meaning in the sound—of course not! Lem's wife had become tired, sitting in the chill of the parlor. People in the back land believe in saving wood, and parlors are only opened for weddings and deaths anyway.

Carter pushed open the door and softly closed it behind him. The rocking became slower. That

afternoon the old woman had paused and looked up, her eyes like small bright beads half buried in a wrinkled leather pillow. Carter had to force his eyes toward the chair. Then he stared and could not move. The chair was empty, and still it moved, and as he watched it swayed faster, as though the old woman had seen who it was and did not care.

For a moment Carter stood stone still. He could feel the flesh of his face grow ice cold. Suddenly he clenched his hands. "I'm going crazy. I'm seeing things." Carter's voice failed. then he rushed to the chair and kicked it from the loose board.

For a few seconds the chair did not move, then it began to hitch, the rockers moving over the unpainted floor, and then it found the board again and the sound filled the room, thin and high, like a mouse that has been caught by its tail, screaming in agony.

Carter backed toward the door. In one hand he held his suitcase. He had not realized that he had taken it from his room. As Carter groped for the knob the chair slowed again, as though the old woman was leaning forward to see him go out into the night.

When Carter stood on the road he pulled the collar of his coat

high to keep out the pounding rain, then he faced toward the next county. It must have been the fever still lurking in his brain. "Yes, it must have been!" Carter said. He repeated the words over and over, but when, high above, two leafless branches rasped together and made one long squeaking note that came above the wind sighs and rain splashing on the road, Carter screamed and ran fast—ran until his breath came in gasps. Then he got hold of himself and settled into a slow steady plodding toward the next county, where a man had said there was a government project and a fellow could get a job.

The Messiah Ben-Joseph

EDWARD RODITI

Father, reading:

Who is he now in our midst, under what
decreasing evil and increasing good?
The written word foretells that he
shall fulfill all prophecies, transmute
our world-old dream which hounds us through
the hostile years with hope of peace
to fact. . . .

Son:

Father, burn your books.
Look the world straight in its evil face. Break
forth from your tower of faith whose painted
windows throw false sunlight on the grey city.
See the sunless streets, pale children, your own
sons deprived of their very human heritage
of work. Do we live by the sweat of our brows?
Your book lies.

Father:

In the days of weak faith
comes violence. Lord, must I behold
the vengeance exacted from my own unbelieving
children? How shall I cry? The violence
is before me in the days of slacked law.

Son:

There is yet faith. There has been faith enough, and more, to ensure us a better world. Can we not live on the credit of our fathers whose faith approved, who never complained that the slow grudging years seemed to cheat them of their old hope of Heaven? We prefer to build our Heaven here, with our raw hands tearing apart the old order, hammering it with our fists into new shape. We are young, and cannot wait till death, till our children and our whole race are dead ere this contract, whose clauses restrict our very breath, be fulfilled.

Daughter, to herself:

All the planets of my body seem to revolve with a new movement around the secret sun of my belly. Yet none know that the systems where I live have changed so suddenly. Why have I been chosen out of my poverty, out of my dull daily toil to bear this timeless joy within me? Why have I been lifted from my dank soil of cares into the clear heaven of his thoughts, keeping a pledge of his light in my own dark flesh? All my life flows towards this pledge, ambassador of Heaven in my very midst.

Mother:

Is there no key to unclose my children's hearts, can no mother read the long rigmaroles of her children's thoughts that each evening seals forever, casts into oblivion, never to be delivered, kept secret and sealed till Kingdom Come? My sons bear that world-old anguished look in their eyes of those who seek water in desert places. In my daughter a new unknown spring of joy wells forth. Each jealous one hides joys and despairs from each jealous other; nor can a mother know what all these words of fire scrawled on the outer wall may mean, nor what lies beyond this wall. . . .

Come, Gena, Come

VALDEMAR HILL

Just take a peep at the market place of St. Thomas. What a spectacle! Do you see the grand mingling of rich and poor? Look at their dresses; some are silk, organdie, crepe-de-chine, others are calico, plain muslin—even rags. The well-dressed ones have just come from morning service. Today is Sunday. The poor ones? They have just come from a horrible night's rest in tightly shuttered houses. Look at their feet. You will notice that the barefooted ones wear the rags. What a conglomerate of dark faces! Here you find all the varieties and shades of humanity. There is a white lady. Surely you must see her. She is conspicuous because of the scarcity of her kind. Very few of the few white people do their own shopping. And they pay more for their vegetables than do the natives.

Let's look at the building. You will note that it is just a large, red roof upheld by white, iron pillars above a concrete base. See the concrete trays heaped with the yellows, greens, and reds of luscious fruits and fresh vegetables. Those trays were installed by the American government a year or two ago. They take the place of the old, wooden

ones erected at the time of the construction of the market place.

This market place was built during the Danish regime. Before that the people used to squat under the shady tamarinds and display their foodstuffs on brown bags laid on the bare ground. Naturally, this was insanitary. So the good old Danes conceived the plan of erecting a building where the selling could be carried on in a more healthy manner.

The paved square that you see around the "bungalow" (local term) was done by benevolent Uncle Sam. The young almond and mahogany trees around the square were planted about five years ago to replace stalwart tamarinds and genips uprooted during the terrible hurricane which swept over the island in 1928.

On Sundays the crowd is larger than ever. There is a native adage which says that "Sunday hunger is equal to ten years' Cologne fever," and the natives firmly believe it. Whatever this "Cologne fever" is, you can't rub it out of them. It is a tradition. However, there is also a logical explanation. It is also due to the strict, almost false, econ-

omy practiced in the island, especially during this period of depression. The natives rarely eat meat or vegetables on week days; but drop into the poorest man's house on Sunday at the mid-day meal, and you are sure to find meat served up on the table. Sunday is the feast day.

The market sellers know it is profitable to heap their trays on Sunday with carrots, lettuce, squash, sugar-apples, pumpkins, yams, tania, soursops, sweet potatoes, mangoes, bananas and other tropical fruits. From this great variety the buyers choose according to the limitations of their purses.

Cha-cha farmers grow these vegetables and fruits. The Chachas are descendants of the great band of French Huguenots who fled from France at the time of the Edict of Nantes. If you follow your history closely, you will find that some of them migrated to what is now the French West Indies. When work became scarce in these French islands, they adventured into the neighboring islands. Thus, some drifted to St. Thomas and settled. Most of these settlers came from the island of St. Barths, which is not very far from St. Thomas. They formed the foundation for the present generation of French peasants. They are hard-working people and in-

dulge in two industries: fishing and farming. The fishermen live in a little village called Honduras, situated on the western shore boundary of the town. The farmers live on the southern side of the long range of hills stretching from east to west across the island. The town is built on a narrow strip of lowland to the south, and climbs a little way up the rolling range. The farmers bring their produce to town on donkeys over good roads, thanks to Uncle Sam. They sell their goods to the market sellers at a low price. They, the market sellers, retail to the community.

Listen to the market sellers. They have developed a great knowledge of the art of selling through the "trial and error" method. It is a pleasure to hear them applying small talk to the selling of their goods. This is often done in a crude way with plenty of noise, which at first sounds like a quarrel. But the buyers are very cunning, and do not often lose out on a bargain.

Here is a little story which will give you an insight into the process of a bargain:

"Come, Gena, come take yo' tania," invited an old woman. "Only five cent ah heap—big heap."

Gena, a big, brown girl dressed in bright calico and a broad

Cha-cha hat, looked over the melange of tancias, tomatoes, lettuce and carrots with a business eye. Alfred, her husband, had given her forty cents. With this she had to buy meat and vegetables for their Sunday dinner. Alfred liked plenty to eat, but hated to pay for it. On Sundays he had to have his big bowl of "veal foot" soup. Unless he saw it on the table with sweet potatoes and dumplings floating in it, he would make a big quarrel and a fight. Gena, who was terribly afraid of his big hands, tried to please him as best as she could, although she often went hungry.

Gena listened to the woman's talk with an accustomed ear, all the time glancing around at the other trays.

"Den see yo' tomahtees just hyer," continued the woman, waving her hands towards the pile of red tomatoes. "Two for three cent," she told Gena, taking up two big ones in her hand.

Gena knew that she could only pay two cents for tomatoes, yet she wanted two like those the woman held out to her.

"My good lady, wait here for me," she said, pretending to go. "Three cent for them I'il thing? See Alice for de country got better ones over dere." She knew Alice's were dearer, but she had to use guile.

The seller, fearing to lose the

sale, said, "Take dem cent apiece den."

Gena pretended reluctance. "All rite," she said indifferently. "I'll help you out wid dem."

Having made her purchase, she turned away with a smile. In her mind she went over the material she had already bought—the calf foot, flour, seasoning, butter, salt, tomatoes, tancias. She had to get some sweet potatoes. Alfred liked sweet potatoes very much, and she had only five cents left. The usual price was six for five cents. Six were scarcely enough for Alfred.

She passed along with the crowd, unheeding the numerous pleas to buy. Her eyes swept quickly over the concrete trays filled with big speckled bananas, long curved squashes, luscious lettuce, bright yellow and red papayas, tancias fresh from the earth, hairy yams, all mixed with green and red peppers, limes, oranges, soursops, sugar-apples, and other fruits.

There were many trays heaped with brown and purple sweet potatoes. Some sellers told her they were five for five cents, others had six for the same price. The best bargain was seven. That was scarcely enough to appease Alfred's enormous appetite. She had one more tray to accost. It belonged to a glum, stalwart woman known as Mama Rose.

Gena squirmed through the crowd. She had one aim—to get at least ten sweet potatoes for a nickel. It was a big job, and she would have to do a lot of talking. But that was better than a beating from Alfred. She shuddered at the thought of how he would bellow, “Oh, Gena, way de potato dem?” She wouldn’t be able to say a word, only sit trembling in a corner. Then he would stride over, swearing loudly, and slap her, kick her, cuff her, until a neighbor or a passerby came in and stopped him.

In such a frame of mind she reached the tray of Mama Rose. There were piles of tancias and large bunches of ripe bananas; but Gena was interested in the large, purple sweet potatoes.

“How de potato go?” asked Gena, showing her even, white teeth. She was rapidly planning how to get what she wanted.

“Six for five cent,” grumbled Mama Rose, hitching up her brown bag apron.

Gena’s heart sank. “All right,” she said. “I’ll come back.”

“Wait,” demanded Mama Rose, pulling her back. “How much potato you want?”

Suddenly Gena thought very hard. She would take a long chance.

“Fifteen,” she said boldly. “And I only got five cent.”

“Can’t work,” declared Mama Rose, shaking her head and loosing her grip. “De most I can give you is eight for five cent.”

“Then lemme go back to Bertha,” Gena said carelessly. She had been nowhere near Bertha’s tray. “She say she was going to give me nine. But knowing you better dan she, I didn’t take dem.”

Mama Rose jerked Gena back roughly. “You take de ole twelve potatoes an’ be satisfy, you hear me!”

Gena took them meekly, but in her eyes twinkled amusement. With a joyful heart she wriggled through the babbling crowd to the exit.

The hub-bub of the market continued. . . .

Big Men

EVERETT LEWIS

Big Men!
Fill your coffers now
Gather in one last sweep
All your winnings
Pile them high on greed
And power's altar.

Muster all your tricks of trade
And spring them
Suddenly. . . .

Camouflage the wage cut
Declare dividends in General Motors
Let U. S. Steel promote a raise in wages
(But don't forget to push the prices higher)

Get the hounds out, Big Men
Disseminate Americanism
And lynch another nigger

Build a bigger and better America
Build it of Jim-Crow and misery,
Speed-up and death
Build it, Big Men,
With the KKK and the DAR
With company unions, Big Men

Spend your days with your toys. . . .
"The instrumentalities of war"
Fill your days with profitable fratricide,
Weave a gaudy-colored tapestry
To drape America with

For this is your fitful end. . . .
Big Men. . . .
Your final hour.

Book Reviews

A Novel About a White Man and a Black Man in the Deep South — By James Saxon Childers — Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., New York — Net \$2.50

Reviewed by Kenneth Macpherson

"That's why I get so damned mad when Northerners try to tell us how to run things," states a character from Mr. Childers' somewhat tenuous novel, and adds later in his diatribe, "Seriously, though, it is trying to have these uninformed Northerners meddling — particularly when they have a genius for doing it in a way calculated to do the most harm. Why can't they come to progressive Southern leaders and say that they want to help, and let's talk it over? That way, we might pool what we have and actually get somewhere, instead of keeping up a three-way snarl between Southerners, Northerners and Negroes."

Undoubtedly in this there is truth, and the point is not labored sufficiently to insist that an increasing number of Northerners are not as uninformed as many people from the South would think. Confusion exists, undoubtedly, and many regrettable things are done ostensibly to aid the race situation, actually to appease the personal frustrations of people and even bodies of people who leap to the aid of

a minority the moment they can identify it with repressed grievances in their own lives. The incredible animosity existing deep in the minds of men who refuse to their fellow-creatures recognition of a common humanity has determined the whole of history. Nowhere, however, not even in present-day Germany has persecution reached so deplorable a level as in the Southern American states. Hunger, want, fear, jealousy; all play their part, but it goes deeper than that; so deep that the author of this book, with every evidence of sincerity, loses himself hopelessly before the immensity of the subject he has attempted. The frame of reference and all its ramifications are far too massive for so frail an etching. A subject of this nature requires the discipline and stature of genius. Even more it requires a purpose with greater constructive importance than the disillusionment and suicide of a girl whose fiance leaves her when the Negro friend of her brother visits their home. And this is the gist of the whole book. In between are chapters dealing with

the life of the White Man and that of his sister, both of them poets whose phrases, trotted out in moments of crisis and content, are invariably bad. "I am a debauchee of dew."

Then comes the Negro's life, and finally a winding-up which knits back to the beginning, except that the book starts with a first-person narrative which disappears to appear no more. Sandwiched in between the sections are long poems, desperate with sincerity but infelicitous to

a degree. Yet, in spite of all this confusion and lack of narrative ability, it is impossible not to admire the evident honesty which has urged this author of a considerable number of books, to attempt unflinchingly a subject to which unfortunately his approach is less intellectual than emotional. Perhaps he will try again some day and succeed in straightening out his sense of right and wrong in a logical and compelling impressiveness.

Dear Reader

It has been nearly a year since CHALLENGE last appeared. It is true that CHALLENGE, which is entirely supported by its subscriptions and the generosity of its well-wishers, is often delayed for financial reasons. However, that delay is generally a matter of weeks, not months. This time our definite cessation was almost entirely due to the lack of even fair material.

We cannot understand the reason for this. We hope it is only because CHALLENGE may not be known to the young writing people we want to reach. It would cause us no little despair to believe there was a dearth in good writing, and that even if CHALLENGE were on every newsstand and was in a position to pay its contributors, there would be no inflow of readable stuff.

This is no disparagement of the material we are printing in this issue. We feel it measures up to past issues. But everything came in so sporadically that a good piece had to wait for weeks before a companion piece swelled the slight sum total.

Perhaps CHALLENGE'S editorial policies have never been clearly stated. However, if you will consult your first issue you

will find its aims defined. Our personal preferences and political opinions in no way, we trust, influence our judgment of material. Certainly we prefer a progressive magazine. Certainly we prefer manuscripts from new Negro writers; or, rather, we are happiest when the greater balance of the magazine is devoted to the young Negro. But we have no intention of dictating style, choice of subject, or content. We would defeat the purpose of the magazine, mainly to foster developing talents, if we rejected these early gropings toward style, social consciousness and adulthood.

Our special hope is for the young Negro to grow to complete awareness of his heritage, his position as a member of a minority group, and his duty to take some active part in social reform. He must not escape, through his university training, to a consideration of himself as an entity apart. He must know the South, whose centre is not the campus. He must know the North, whose main stem is not Sugar Hill.

From the first, we contacted Negro schools with unbelievably poor results. Our explanatory letters and complimentary copies of the magazine to the heads of English departments were, for the most part, ignored. We doubt that the magazine and its expressed intent reached many of the students, for we still have faith in the younger generation, and feel that there would have been a greater response.

Yet we are not entirely discouraged, for we have become greatly interested in a young Chicago group, one of whose members appears in this issue. These young Chicagoans hold meetings regularly, where their work is read for open discussion. The meetings, we are told, are lively and well attended. CHALLENGE has come in for considerable dispraise, but we have never resented honest opinions. And we have retaliated by offering them a special section in a forthcoming issue, that they may show us what we have not done by showing us what they can do.

We wish to thank publicly our subscribers and contributors who have continued to support CHALLENGE despite its infrequent appearances. It is our sincere aim to justify their trust in us and their faith in CHALLENGE by our earnest efforts to continue the life of the magazine and to infuse it with greater vitality.

D. W.

Voices

MARIAN MINUS, a graduate of Fisk, is at present a student of anthropology in Chicago. Her home is New York. She is in the vanguard of the young Chicagoans.

VALDEMAR HILL is a native of St. Thomas. His article came across the sea with just his name and address. So we are only guessing he is a native of St. Thomas.

ALFRED MORANG sent us his interesting story from a place called Yaddo. His biographical note stated that he has appeared in nearly all of the little magazines and to a large extent in the left wing press. He was reprinted in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories: 1935*. The London Times acknowledges him as one of the American proletarian writers.

PAUL TREMAINE has sent us another story. We last heard that he was in Arizona. By now he is probably in some other far place, still hoboing, still unable to adjust to his discovery that part of his blood is black. We believe that he sends us his stuff first draft, for we do a lot of editing. But we are definitely decided that he has talent and we hope he will send us other things along the way.

EDWARD RODITI, whose present address is New York, has appeared in several publications and is the author of a book of verse.

MARCIA PRENDERGAST is a young New York school girl, as lovely as a poem herself, and as serious as the brief verse in this issue is not. She sent us a sheaf of very adult things, but we liked this little one.

LOUIS G. SUTHERLAND has appeared in CHALLENGE before. We guess we can call him a regular contributor. Quite recently he has had articles in the *Spur* and *Country Gentleman*. He brought a copy of the *Spur* to show us, and we read it while he shifted from one foot to the other on his way to a seamen's forum. He isn't a seaman, but he's a progressive, and a swell guy.

HENRI WEIGEL, really Henriette, is a New Yorker who was so nice about her willingness to change the ending of her story to suit our fancy that we used the original ending after

all. She has appeared in other publications and has promised us a story with a Negro theme, which we hope she will send us.

KENNETH MACPHERSON is a visiting Englishman who is an occasional contributor to the English publication, *Life and Letters*. We call him a visiting Englishman, but he visits regularly. His earnest Englishness is a delight.

OWEN DODSON, a graduate of Bates, is now a student at the Yale drama school in New Haven.

BRUCE NUGENT appears in print again after a long silence, and we are glad to print this mad tale. He was one of the leaders of the old New Negro group, and one of the most talented, but admittedly a lazy bohemian. He is less bohemian and a lot less lazy. If he never writes a good book, we will be more disappointed even than he.

EVERETT LEWIS is to us a new name. He sent us his poem with no accompanying biographical note. We like this poem, which is the sort of present-day things CHALLENGE wishes in its pages.

BESSIE CALHOUN BIRD, however, for whom we have no biographical note either, has written a poem which was to us lovely and understandable on the first reading, and we knew at once that we would use it. We hope to print her again. There is to us as much room in our magazine for her kind of poetry when it is good as there is for Lewis' kind when it is good.

CHALLENGE Wishes

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No manuscript returned without self-addressed envelope.